

**UNIVERSITY OF YORK**

**Senate**

**RESEARCH COMMITTEE**

**Minutes of the meeting held on 17 June 2020**

**Present:** Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research), Professor M Ruth (Chair)  
Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Partnerships and Engagement), Professor K Trehan  
Associate Dean (Research), Faculty of Sciences, Professor S Thompson  
Associate Dean (Research), Faculty of Social Sciences,  
Professor Y Birks  
Associate Dean (Research), Faculty of Arts & Humanities,  
Professor R Ogden  
Dean, York Graduate Research School, Professor T Stoneham  
Professor D Barnett  
Professor S Carroll  
Professor M Evans  
Professor M Goddard  
Professor S Smith  
Professor E Tyler  
Professor P White  
Director of Research & Enterprise, Dr D McBeth  
Associate Director of Research & Enterprise, Ms J Gilmartin  
Research Strategy and Policy Manager, Ms A Grey

**In attendance:** Ms Z Clarke (Secretary)  
Mr P Wiles (M19-20/127)  
Mr E Kirby (M19-20/134 only)  
Karen Clegg (M19-20/135 only)

Apologies for absence were received from Professors S Bell, A Field, B Fulton and J Thijssen.

**19-20/117 Membership**

Professors D Barnett, J Steele and P White had been due to end their terms in June 2020. Following discussion in the meeting, it was **agreed** to discuss with Senate the possibility of extending these members terms until the end of the REF cycle in June 2021. This would be negotiated as necessary outside the meeting.

**ACTION: ZC**

### **19-20/118 Declaration of conflicts of interest**

Members of the Committee were reminded of the procedure for declaring potential conflicts of interest relating to the business of the meeting.

### **19-20/119 Minutes of the meeting held on 29 April 2020**

The Committee **approved** the minutes of the meeting held on 29 April 2020 (RC.19-20/91).

### **19-20/120 Research Committee action log**

The Committee **received** a progress report against its action log for 2019/20 (RC.18-19/92). Further to the information provided, the Committee **noted** the following:

- Work on the new pump-priming process (M.19-20/12) had been marked as completed, with pump-priming having been reviewed as part of the consideration of research support under COVID-19.
- The update on the implementation of DORA (M.19-20/100) would not be presented to the Committee at this point, and instead had been postponed until October.

### **19-20/121 Report from the Chair**

The Committee **received** an oral report from the Chair. The following points were **noted**:

- The House of Commons Science and Technology Committee had circulated a call for evidence regarding a government proposal on the establishment of a new research funding agency similar to the US DARPA. This agency would fund high-risk, high-reward research. Further clarity was required as to who comment was sought from; the Chair would seek further information on this issue. The deadline for comment was 30 June.
- Work was ongoing within the Research Contingency Group to open up campus following lockdown. The University was largely on schedule in doing so, and a number of labs were open and operating at reduced capacity. The Committee **noted** the importance of proper supervision for those in labs, and it was **confirmed** that departments required the presence of a PI in open labs. Guidance was also in development concerning the resumption of fieldwork, including face-to-face research. Currently the Library was prohibited from opening due to government guidelines, however discussion was ongoing and plans were in development to open the Library once possible.

### **19-20/122 Oral Report from the Dean of the York Graduate Research School**

The Committee **received** an oral report on recent developments from the Dean of the York Graduate Research School, in which the following points were **noted**:

- The University had been used as a case study by the Office for Students, highlighting the risk-based progression system introduced as part of the coronavirus response at York. The process for starting PhDs remotely had been initiated through contact with offer holders, and it was hoped this would help the University maximise the number of PGRs starting in September.

- A proposal for a NERC CDT on managing chemical risk in the environment, led by Professor Alistair Boxall, has been invited into the second round, having received very strong feedback, particularly concerning the scientific background of the project, in the first round.
- Two ITN proposals – one on chemical archaeology (ChemArch) and one on coordinating chemical molecular catalysts (CCIMC) – had been funded, and joint doctorates would be set up as part of this with the Universities of Copenhagen and Toulouse respectively.
- Another Q&A session would take place on 19 June for PGR students, which would identify further issues and areas of uncertainty faced by students. The Dean of YGRS would sit on the panel alongside representatives of the Graduate Students Association (GSA) and professional support services.

### 19-20/123 Reports from the Associate Deans (Research)

The Committee **received** oral reports from the Associate Deans for Research, as follows:

#### *Social Sciences*

- (a) Research work continued at a steady pace within the Faculty. It was **reported** that York had been successfully awarded four of seven available White Rose Doctoral Training Partnership awards, which was commendable.
- (b) Planning for the Festival of Social Sciences had been initiated. The Festival would be held online, which would enable the University to capitalise on collaborations in the UK and abroad.
- (c) In terms of governance, the review of ReCSS would be picked up again shortly, with the aim of accommodating recent changes to the University and research landscape. A panel looking at 5 outline applications for ESRC centres is meeting to prioritize which two to progress.

#### *Sciences*

- (a) Laboratories and research facilities were reopening in phases and work is progressing well, managed by Simon Breeden (Faculty Technical Manager) and Paul Bushnell from DECS. Implementing the University COVID-19 health and safety guidelines is managed via local arrangements in each department according to the requirements of the buildings and the nature of the research. Once a steady state is reached, then operations will be reviewed to ensure risk (including at the institutional level) was being managed appropriately and to consider further evolution of the local arrangements.
- (b) Grant activity was ongoing despite the COVID-19 disruption, with funding calls from research councils continuing. *[Sentence redacted for reasons of confidentiality]*.
- (c) International collaboration work was encouraging, including a virtual visit with Maastricht University. *[Sentence redacted for reasons of confidentiality]*.
- (d) Future activity was expected within the Faculty regarding medical technologies and engineering, stimulated by the appointment of Dan Watts as the new Champion for the Technologies of the Future research theme and the expansion of Electronic Engineering into this research area.

#### *Arts & Humanities*

(a) The Faculty remained busy in terms of research activity, with roughly twice as many queries as normal being submitted to the HRC support team. The minutes of the Faculty Research Group reflected this (RC.19-20/110), however it was important to note that the full effect of the lockdown would vary across departments. Although the gender split of applications had remained consistent within the Faculty up to this point, it was **noted** that further analysis of these demographics would be useful.

**ACTION: RO to share demographic figures with MG**

- (b) The HRC was prioritising the promotion of civic humanities activity, in order to support members in looking towards new challenges and developments in research.
- (c) The Faculty was keen to continue activity for postgraduate students, including a doctoral fellowship competition later in the month.

#### **19-20/124 Report from the Director of Research & Enterprise (FOI Exempt)**

The Committee **received** a report on recent activity in the Research & Enterprise Directorate (RC.19-20/93), **noting** the following in particular:

- (a) The Directorate remained busy due to increased application activity. Departments had coped well with the challenges of the lockdown, and help from RSPO and RGC had been particularly appreciated. The IP & Legal Team was still short of the ideal number of staff, however recruitment was underway for the head of the department. It was hoped that the full team would be in place by late autumn. In the meantime, any issues could be brought to the attention of the Director or Associate Director of Research and Enterprise.
- (b) The work taking place at the University regarding citizenship had received good feedback at the national level, and had a positive impact on the perception of York across the UK.

#### **19-20/125 Verbal update on progress regarding the Wellcome Trust Guidance for the implementation of DORA**

This item has been **postponed**.

#### **19-20/126 Report on support for research**

The Committee **considered** a report on support for research (RC.19-20/94). It was **clarified** that all PGR students approaching their deadline were able to apply for an extension, and that this was a simple online process.

#### **19-20/127 University Strategy for Sustainability in Research.**

The Committee **considered** the draft University Strategy for Sustainability in Research (RC.19-20/95). The following points were noted:

- (a) In developing the Strategy, the aim was to develop a framework for sustainability research which was inspiring, engaging and inclusive. The document presented was high-level and did not focus on specific mechanisms for both strategic and operational reasons; it was **recognised** that ongoing discussions about the overarching University Strategy meant that a Sustainability in Research Strategy tied into specific mechanisms

would not be useful, and also that financial implications should be addressed separately and in-depth. The Working Group would continue to work alongside the development of the University Strategy and would return with a full implementation plan by the end of 2020. Related work on sustainability would look more broadly at the issue in terms of teaching and HR.

**ACTION: PW, ZC to add to agenda**

- (b) The Committee **recommended** the following changes to the Strategy; (i) that the fourth value listed in the Strategy be edited to better reflect the University commitment to working fairly with global partners and within the international context, (ii) that the Strategy include greater recognition of the vertical integration of research and teaching as a strategic priority, and (iii) that the Strategy include more explicit recognition of the importance of local sustainability research.

**ACTION: PW**

- (c) Currently, a number of research centres at the University were working within the area of sustainability, and it was **recognised** that there was potential for greater cohesion amongst these centres, with a focus on encouraging new perspectives and building a larger community.
- (d) In order to enable researchers to meet the seventh strategic priority, concerning practicalities and infrastructure, guidance on sustainable research practices was under development, and conversation ongoing with technical staff in support of this.

The Committee **approved** the draft University Strategy for Sustainability in Research, subject to the modifications mentioned above.

**ACTION: PW and Chair to discuss follow-up steps.**

#### **19-20/128 Update on due diligence procedures at the University.**

The Committee **received** for information an update on due diligence procedures at the University (RC.19-20/96). The Research Integrity and Compliance Manager spoke to this item. In addition to the information available in the paper, the following points were noted:

- (a) The work was related to developments across the sector, and York was in conversation with other institutions to encourage good practice sharing and greater collaboration.
- (b) It was **clarified** that the due diligence work completed thus far mainly related to pre-award processes, however there was scope in the future to consider post-award issues, such as the protection of intellectual property.

#### **19-20/129 Annual Statement on Research Integrity**

The Committee **approved** the annual statement on Research Integrity (RC.19-20/97). The Statement would be sent to Senate and Council for approval prior to inclusion of the University webpages.

**ACTION: ZC**

### **19-20/130 Guidelines on the use of Social Media Data in Research**

The Committee **approved** the Guidelines on the Use of Social Media Data in Research (RC.19-20/98). It was **noted** that, in order to ensure the effectiveness of the guidelines, community awareness was essential; similarly, relevant professional services teams should be made aware that the guidance had been approved, so that they were able to plan for an increased number of queries on the topic.

**ACTION: ZC**

### **19-20/131 Reclassification of the York Neuroimaging Centre as a Model 1 research entity**

The Committee **approved** the request to approve the reclassification of the York Neuroimaging Centre as a Model 1 entity (RC.19-20/100).

### **19-20/132 Classification of the Leverhulme Centre for Diversity in the Anthropocene as a Model 2 Research entity**

The Committee **approved** the request to approve the classification of the Leverhulme Centre for Diversity in the Anthropocene as a as a Model 2 entity (RC.19-20/101).

### **19-20/133 Proposals for the 2019/20 review of research entities**

The committee **approved** proposals for the 2019/20 review of research entities (RC.19-20/102). The process would be initiated shortly, and would be helpful when developing the University's strategic plan in the coming academic year.

**ACTION: ZC**

### **19-20/134 HESA income data**

*[Item redacted for reasons of confidentiality].*

### **19-20/135 REF Strategy Group minutes (Confidential)**

*[Item redacted for reasons of confidentiality].*

### **19-20/136 Implementation of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers**

The Committee **received** an update on the implementation of the concordat to support the career development of researchers. (RC.19-20/99). The Head of the Research Excellence Training Team (RETT) attended to speak to this item. In addition to the information provided in the paper, the following points were **noted**:

- (a) A culture change was needed in order to most effectively meet the requirements of the Concordat. The Concordat Working Group would first conduct a gap analysis against the requirements of the Concordat, followed by a draft action plan which would be discussed by the Committee in November. A final draft of the action plan would be presented for approval in February 2021. It was **suggested** that the University request an extension due to the ongoing COVID-19 situation. Further clarity was needed as to

what form consultation with Faculties might take, and the Head of RETT would meet with the Associate Deans (Research) to discuss this. Conversation was also needed with the Dean of YGRS regarding PGR students.

**ACTION: KC, AD(R)s, TS**

- (b) The Committee **noted** the importance of thinking broadly about what constituted a development activity, with a focus on broadening perspectives and considering the researcher needs. It was important also to think beyond PGRs, and to recognise that efforts on this front should aim to meet the needs of all in the research community.
- (c) Encouraging buy-in from researchers, particularly PIs, was key to successfully implementing the Concordat. It was **noted** that the requirement that 10 days be allocated to personal development would soon become an expectation from funders, although funders had not yet increased the amount of funding available to accommodate this. The University would need to consider how best to record activities undertaken in an efficient and effective manner, without increasing the administrative burden on staff.
- (d) Further clarification was needed as to whether wording should be inserted into contracts specifying the requirement for development time, so that industry partners were aware.

**ACTION: KC**

#### **19-20/137 Research grant applications and awards: Year to Date May 2020 and Previous 4 Year Comparisons**

The committee **considered** a report on research grant applications and awards: Year to Date May 2020 and Previous 4 Year Comparisons. (RC.19-20/104) (*FOI Exempt*). The following points were **noted**:

- (a) *[Section redacted due to FOI exemption]*.
- (b) The use of number values in addition to graphs would be helpful in future reporting. The Research Reporting Working Group continued to work on ways to make data available to PIs and departments.

## **CATEGORY II BUSINESS**

#### **19-20/138 Minutes of the Research Communications Strategy Group meeting held on 2 June 2020.**

The Committee **received** for information the minutes of the meeting of the Research Communications Strategy Group held on 2 June 2020 (RC.19-20/106).

#### **19-20/139 Minutes of the GCRF Steering Group meeting held on 21 May 2020.**

The Committee **received** for information the minutes of the meeting of the GCRF Steering Group held on 21 May 2020 (RC.19-20/107).

#### **19-20/140 Minutes of the Faculty Research Group for the Social Sciences meeting held on 27 May 2020.**

The Committee **received** for information the minutes of the meeting of the Faculty Research Group for the Social Sciences held on 27 May 2020 (RC.19-20/108).

**19-20/114 Minutes of the Faculty Research Group for the Sciences meeting held on 21 May 2020.**

The Committee **received** for information the minutes of the meeting of the Faculty Research Group for the Arts and Humanities held on 21 May 2020 (RC.19-20/109).

**19-20/141 Minutes of the Faculty Research Group for the Arts and Humanities meeting held on 21 May 2020.**

The Committee **received** for information the minutes of the meeting of the Faculty Research Group for the Arts and Humanities held on 21 May 2020 (RC.19-20/110).

**19-20/142 Next meetings**

The Committee noted details of the meetings for the next academic year, as follows:

Thursday 1 October at 9.30am in H/G17, Heslington Hall

Wednesday 25 November at 9.30am in H/G17, Heslington Hall

Wednesday 3 February at 2pm in H/G17, Heslington Hall

Wednesday 17 March at 9.30am in H/G17, Heslington Hall

Wednesday 5 May at 9.30am in H/G17, Heslington Hall

Wednesday 23 June at 2pm in H/G17, Heslington Hall

It was **noted** that the number of meetings not taking place in the usual Wednesday afternoon slot could have a potentially adverse effect on the number of members able to attend.

**zc/zc**

June 2020